

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN AFFAIRS**

**Meeting Minutes**

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2009

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Place: Baltimore City Hall  
100 Holiday Street, Reeves Room  
Baltimore, Maryland

Present: Chair Anwer Hasan, Bilal M. Ayyub, Dorreya (Didi) Elmenshaw, Miriam Galston, Irma Hafeez, Rafi Rone, Nadia Sawaya, Julian Spierer, Ibrahim Uyar, Khalil A. Zaied

Absent: Rudwan Abu-rumman, Durriya Bandani, Zahid H. Bukhari, Riad Dakheel, Sayad hassan, Majid R. Mirza, Murat Ozer, Farzaneh Riar, Yonathan (Yoni) Zohar

Staff Present: Iman Awad, Agnes M. Smith

**I. Call to Order and Greetings**

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Chair Anwer Hasan. Chair Hasan welcomed the Commissioners, staff and guest. It was also noted that communication has to be clear in respect of meeting one month before. Commissioners are to R.S.V.P. attendance to meetings. Executive Administrator Agnes M. Smith is to send out invitation reminders to Commission through Outlook e-mail. Chair Hasan noted that committed persons are needed to serve on the Commission. Chair Hasan told the Commission that they have a revolving task in hand and if it is not delivered the Commission becomes useless. People will start saying why should we invest time and money and the Commission is not bringing results.

Chair Hasan also informed the Commission that this is the first anniversary of the Commission. He spoke about the Annual Report that is due to the Governor. Some work has been done, but there is a lot more to do.

**II. Review Minutes February 26, 2009**

Motion to accept February 26, 2009 Minutes: Chair Hasan with typographical corrections

Seconded Motion to accept February 26, 2009 Minutes: Commissioner Khalil A. Zaied

Minutes approved by Commission with corrections

### **III. GOCI Staff Update**

Executive Administrator Smith gave Special Assistant Awad's staff report.

On Tuesday March 17th met with the US Arab Chamber of Commerce to discuss with them the Commission's initiative for a sister state with Abu Dhabi and other Commission agenda items. The Chamber said they would be there in support for whatever they can.

On Wednesday March 25th participated with other members from GOCI on the Census Kick-Off

On Thursday March 26th met with GOMA and MDOT to discuss the upcoming disparity study on the appropriate steps to include the Middle Eastern community.

On Thursday April 2nd attended and gave remarks at the Montgomery College Arab American Heritage Kick-Off. At this event met with representatives from the embassies of Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

On Wednesday April 15th went to the location of the Health Conference to get an idea of the layout. Information about the room are listed and included in the meeting packet.

On Thursday April 23rd met with Corey Saylor, Legislative Director for the Council on American Islamic Relations. Discussed common initiatives and the prospects of future partnerships, specifically how to work together to collect resumes to develop the "talent bank" idea for the Workforce Committee.

### **IV. Community Development**

Commissioner Rafi Rone gave an update about the upcoming Health Care Conference scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2009 at LifeBridge Health System, 2434 West Belvedere Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland. He noted that they are in the process of getting the panelists. This is going to be a great opportunity for communities to have their representatives come and discuss healthcare access, educating the community, etc.

Chair Hasan spoke about this being the first event the Commission has taken the lead, initiative and sponsoring for. He noted that it's encumbered upon the Commission to

make this a success by reaching out to the constituents and by attending. He noted that they are trying to get the Secretary of health to come.

Commissioner Rone told the Commission that the target count for the Health Conference is seventy-five. The room fits seventy-five persons comfortably.

Chair Hasan noted that this is not a health fair. This is more like looking at cultural sensitivity, gaps on how persons of different backgrounds are treated when visiting hospitals, etc. This is the main thrust of this Health Care Conference. Chair Hasan asked Commissioner Sawaya to explain the reason for the Health Conference.

Commissioner Sawaya explained that the Health Conference is to raise awareness of health disparities in the Middle Eastern community. She spoke about what the Health Conference is and who should attend. The main reason for this conference is to brainstorm with key stakeholders. There has not been a study for the Middle Eastern community. The conference will increase knowledge and raise awareness of the Middle Eastern community health needs, explore health disparities, foster opportunities for partnerships and collaborations, highlight best practice models to minimize barriers to quality care and providing access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services. It was noted that policy makers, community advocates, community leaders and partners, health professionals, medical care providers, etc. should attend. She also noted that the community panel needs input from Commission for representation. It was asked what kind of representatives? Commissioner Sawaya answered religious leaders, physicians, etc. are needed to hear how to cater to community. There will be 3-5 person panelists for the conference. The agenda will be finalized and sent to Commission.

Chair Hasan encouraged the Commissioners to attend the Health Conference. The Commission will help.

## **V. Workforce Development**

Commissioner Miriam Galston spoke about the website enhancement which has a link to job listings thanks to Special Assistant Iman Awad. See for yourself, at [www.middleeastern.maryland.gov/jobs.html](http://www.middleeastern.maryland.gov/jobs.html).

She also spoke about the Talent Bank how initially we hoped to solicit resumes from people interested in government jobs or appointments to Maryland commissions, boards, and similar bodies. However, our initial exploration, with the Egyptian American Association, suggested that people may not be interested in passing their resumes to strangers without something specific in view.

Commissioner told the Commission that Special Assistant Awad met with Corey Saylor, the Legislative Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and reported that he was interested in partnering with us to increase the

presence of Muslims in the government workforce. After discussion between Mr. Saylor and the Committee members, we have decided to pursue this partnership with the following pilot project.

CAIR will contribute the services of an intern to develop an outreach program that will begin by announcing to the network of mosques associated with CAIR the existence and nature of the program and soliciting resumes from them. Using the book of Muslim resumes that was given to the Obama transition team as a model, CAIR will classify the resumes and match them to existing job vacancies (the “marriage”). The role of our Committee is to provide CAIR with links to job listings for state and local government entities. (The county links are already available, but we will have to develop the state and city links.) Based upon Director Saylor’s experience in other states, he assured us that they have had no problem in obtaining resumes this way. The CAIR intern will provide the labor which, it is hoped, will only be an hour or two a day once the system is set up.

Commissioner Galston told the Commission about the followed up on the invitation extended this winter by Joe Heiney-Gonzalez, Special Assistant to the Director, Montgomery County Office of Human Resources, to walk a group of people (which we would supply) through the application process with the goal of increasing their understanding of what makes an application successful. Unfortunately, there is a hiring freeze in effect now in MC, which perhaps explains why we haven’t heard back from Joe. In a follow up note we proposed, as a possible alternative, an event walking college students and recent graduates through the process of applying for MC internships and apprentice positions.

Commissioner Galston noted that research on statistics about the jobs most in demand in Maryland have been done, but we have not yet attempted to determine through our networks which specialties in demand in the State are also of interest to significant numbers of MEA in our networks.

Commissioner Galston spoke about openings on commissions, committees and boards. It was noted that the web site is somewhat opaque for someone wishing to find out about serving on a commission because the link is through the drop down box on the home page. That box lists “Executive commissions and ... Committees.” The Committee will work with Special Assistant Awad to ask that the home page ([www.maryland.gov](http://www.maryland.gov)) add a link in the list on the left side for “Volunteer,” which would lead to a link to commissions, etc., and links to other volunteer opportunities (which are now accessible through the “Career Opportunities” link). We also need to talk to them about getting an intern to figure out a way for vacancies to be listed in one place or, in the alternative, to create a master chart with the dates of projected vacancies.

Also the Committee would like to have a workshop with Secretary Hitchcock’s staff. Hopefully the office in charge of selecting people to serve on commissions, etc., would be willing to hold a workshop at a large organization with a large population of

MEA. However, staff there told us that they do not do such workshops. The Committee subject to this Commission's approval, is to ask Secretary Hitchcock's office to send someone to brief our Commission together with some of the other GOCI commissions. Our hope is that this will be seen by them as an efficient way to inform the outreach communities. Further, we would like this to occur at an open Commission meeting, so that we can invite an officer from various MEA organizations (e.g., CAIR, ICM, MCC) to attend, get informed, and spread the word about these opportunities and the process to their memberships. We hope that this Commission will approve this also.

Chair Hasan informed the Committee to get engaged with the Appointments Office and have a meeting with Secretary Jeanne Hitchcock at her office.

Commissioner Galston said that she thought it would be more helpful to have more than one Commission represented with the meeting with Secretary Hitchcock. It was noted that the Commission needs to know the process to become a member of commissions, boards and committees.

Commissioner Galston informed the Commission that Special Assistant Awad is currently assembling a list of MEA associations for all the committees on the Commission to use. To assist her, we are sending around a tablet on which each member should write down all MEA organizations that she/he knows about and indicate if the member knows someone at that association (and list the person's name).

Hopefully Special Assistant Awad (and, hopefully, a summer intern) will get in touch with each organization to determine the individual there in charge of communicating to members. Then we will follow up with a scripted short paragraph announcing our existence and describing our activities.

Commissioner Irma Hafeez informed the Commission about Arab American Heritage Month. There are 10,000 registered voters for translation.

Chair Hasan spoke about the resource booklet for the Commission. Commissioner Hafeez spoke about having Arabic languages in schools. Chair Hasan said that he was meeting with Mary Gable about Arabic language program at schools. There is a need for a sustainable program. Commissioner Hafeez asked how and who the Commission can push this program to? Chair Hasan said the Heritage Language Preservation program.

## **VI. Business Development**

Chair Hasan gave updates on how to include Middle Eastern community into MBE program. He noted that there was a need to define the Middle East. The Commission must advise these offices which countries should be included and provide a definition for the Middle Eastern category.

Chair Hasan along with Commissioner Zaid and Commissioner Hafeez met with GOMA. Commissioner Zaid suggested that the definition of other groups be expanded or make a new category for “Middle Eastern”. It was noted that it was easier to expand definitions.

The Committee was informed by GOMA that the study is in the beginning phases and participation is still possible. The Commission will have to show statistical and anecdotal evidence of discrimination in the workforce. All of the evidence should prove why the Middle Eastern community should be included in the program. Evidence should be collected specifically on social exclusion in professional organizations, the University system and other educational institutions. This information must be support with court cases and statistics. Chair Hasan informed the Commission that evidence should go back as far as available data is available to make the strongest case. He also noted that they should not focus totally on 9/11 cases.

## **VII. Peace Zone**

Commissioner Julian Spirer informed the Commission about the progress of the Peace Zone. There is a venue in Prince George’s County and the officials are excited. Basis made on where customers are. There is a dialog with embassies. Commissioner Spirer also noted that the Peace Zone may be an incentive for Maryland.

## **Martha Nathanson, Vice President, Government Relations and Advocacy LifeBridge Health**

Commissioner Rone introduced Ms. Martha Nathanson, Vice President, Government Relations and Advocacy LifeBridge Health.

Ms. Martha Nathanson gave a briefing on the Health Conference that LifeBridge Health which is a Jewish Hospital is hosting. There are twelve left from fifty-nine across the country. It was founded because Jewish physicians couldn’t go to certain schools and when they finally got into medical school they were told they weren’t allowed to have privileges and so they had no place to take their patients. LifeBridge Health is celebrating fifty years. Also part of the system is Northwest Hospital in Randallstown. They have seen their service area change and have gotten involved at policy level through her job as a lobbyist with the whole issue of health care disparities and trying to serve the population that they have come to serve over a number of years. Although they are a Jewish hospital, only 15% of their patients are Jewish and the rest is from all over the world. They have a initiative for health care disparities where all of their administrative staff is being trained in health care disparities and cultural competency. Then that becomes a trainer the trainer and eventually is distributed throughout the organization. They are a year or two in the formulized part of the training. Ms. Nathanson said that she was glad to add a little bit of expertise to the panel and be a host. She stated that LifeBridge health is very

happy that the Commission will be able to see the facility and learn a little bit about that part of town.

Chair Hasan again thanked Ms. Nathanson for helping the Commission to make this conference a success. He is anticipating what comes out of this study/discussion. It will be very helpful for us to bridge the gap down the road.

### **VIII. Public Participation**

Mr. Bash Pharoan suggested that the location for the conference, minutes, membership and political appointments be put on the website. He also expressed his concern for health care.

Ms. Anna White expressed a desire to join subcommittee.

### **IX. Announcements**

American Muslim Business and Professional Association event about State opportunities May 29, 2009

Ms. Rosemary Koontz meeting with Egyptian nurses

### **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.